

ICO call for views on a data protection and journalism code of practice

Introduction

The Information Commissioner is calling for views on a data protection and journalism code of practice (the code).

The Data Protection Act 2018 requires the Commissioner to produce a code of practice that provides practical guidance and promotes good practice in regard to processing personal data for the purposes of journalism. Our intention is for the code to provide practical, pragmatic guidance for journalists on how to comply with data protection legislation, building on the detailed guidance that we have already produced for this sector.

This call for views is the first stage of the consultation process. The Commissioner is seeking input from relevant stakeholders, including media organisations, trade associations, data subjects and those representing the interests of data subjects. We will use the responses we receive to inform our work in developing the code.

The Information Commissioner welcomes feedback on the specific questions set out below. If you would like further information on the call for views, please read our blog post here ([link to blog post](#)), or email journalismcode@ico.org.uk.

The call for views will be open until **Friday 17th May 2019**.

Privacy statement

For this consultation we will publish all responses except for those where the respondent indicates that they are an individual acting in a private capacity (e.g. a member of the public). All responses from organisations and individuals responding in a professional capacity (e.g. academics, freelance journalists, sole traders, legal professionals) will be published. We will remove email addresses and telephone numbers from these responses but apart from this we will publish them in full.

For more information about what we do with personal data please see our [privacy notice](#).

Please note that we are using the platform Snap Surveys to gather this information. Any data collected by Snap Surveys for ICO is stored on UK servers. You can read their [Privacy Policy](#) here.

Section 1: Your views on the code

Q1 We are considering using our current guidance "Data protection and journalism: a guide for the media" as the basis on which we will build the new journalism code. Do you agree or disagree with this approach?

☐ Agree

☒ Disagree

Q2 If you disagree , please explain why?

A specific code of practice creates a form of words where lawyers and unscrupulous individuals (ie many journalists) can find loopholes. Better to have a statement of guiding principles, and really effective penalties (for example suspension of publication for X issues) which can be ramped up for repeat offences.

Q3 "Data protection and journalism: a guide for the media" is split into three sections:

- "Practical guidance" aimed at anyone working in the journalism sector;
- "Technical guidance" aimed at data protection practitioners within media organisations; and
- "Disputes", aimed at senior editors and staff responsible for data protection compliance.

Do you think we should retain this structure for the code?

- ☒ Yes
☐ No

Q4 If no, do you have any suggestions about how we should structure the code?

Q5 Do you think the ICO's existing guidance for journalists addresses the main areas where data protection issues commonly arise?

☒ Yes

☐ No

Q6 If no, what additional areas would you like to see covered?

The use of long-lens photography, doorstepping and microphone-in-the-face reporting would seem to be against the principles of respectful data collection, yet are still rife. Is this the correct route to curb them?

Q7 The journalism code will address changes in data protection law, including developments in relevant case law. Are there any particular changes to data protection law that you think we should focus on in the code?

Nothing I can think of. GDPR is generally very appropriate for the need.

Q8 Apart from recent changes to data protection law, are there any other developments that are having an impact on journalism that you think we should address in the code?

There is a constraint upon the BBC to be fair, balanced, accurate and honest in its reporting. Why not on newspapers? The notorious and very evident bias and distortion of many newspapers on some important issues (Brexit, immigration) is very damaging to public awareness and understanding.

Q9 Are there any case studies or journalism scenarios that you would like to see included in the journalism code?

Please refer to the Conscious Advertising Network (CAN) initiative for a related issue.
Website: <https://www.consciousadnetwork.org/>

Q10 Do you have any other suggestions for the journalism code?
No.

Section 2: About you

Are you?

Q11 Are you?

- ☐ A media organisation?
- ☐ A trade association?
- ☐ An organisation representing the interests of data subjects?
- ☐ An academic?
- ☐ An individual acting in a professional capacity?
- ☐ An organisation that regulates press standards?
- ☐ An individual acting in a private capacity (e.g. someone providing their views as a member of the public)?
- ☒ Other?

Please specify:

Editor of a special-interest magazine / newsletter

Q12 How did you find out about this survey?

- ☒ ICO website
- ☐ Social media
- ☐ Conference/seminar
- ☐ Trade/professional association
- ☐ Media
- ☐ Word of mouth
- ☐ Other?

Please specify:

We may want to contact you about some of the points you have raised. If you are happy for us to do this please provide your email address:

Thank you for taking the time to share your views and experience.